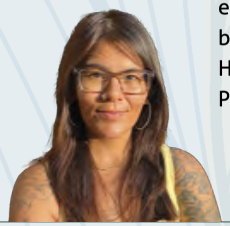
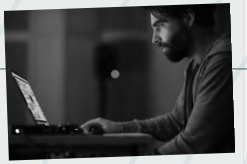
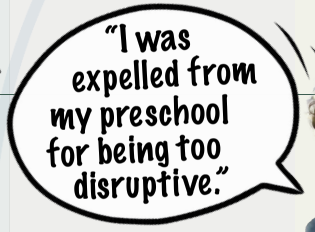
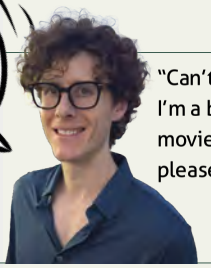
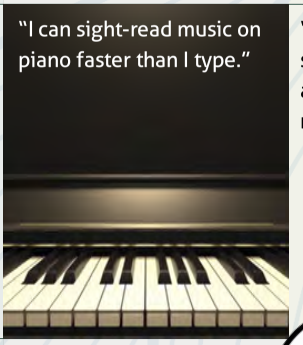
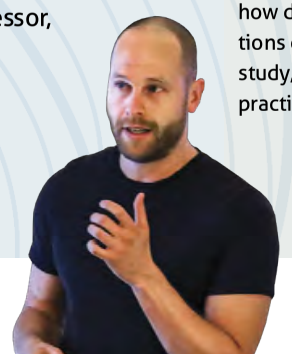
New Faculty, in Their Own Words

What do a bioarchaeologist, a glass artist, a body percussionist and a philosopher expelled from preschool have in common? They are among 15 new School of Liberal Arts faculty bringing fresh questions, creative practices, and unexpected perspectives to Tulane. In these three quick-read introductions, they share what animates their work, what they value in students, a few surprising personal stories — and what draws them to New Orleans.

	What are you exploring?	What might surprise people about you?	What student question stays with you?	Where does New Orleans enter the picture?
Sebastian Galiani Professor, Economics and the Weatherhead Presidential Chair in Economics	"I am excited to join an ambitious department at an important moment in its development, and to contribute to its work in development economics and Latin America."	"I once served as Argentina's vice minister of economy."	"What happens if we change the assumptions?" 	"I am looking forward to discovering New Orleans." Away from campus, he'll be "reading at home or going for a long walk."
Anne Dymek Assistant Professor, Comparative Literature 	"I hope to develop two interdisciplinary research initiatives alongside my book projects: an investigation of literary immersion and perspective-taking, and the 'Poetic Brain Project,' exploring whether noninvasive brain technologies can support imagination and creativity."	"I've fallen in love because of a footnote." 	"One of my favorites came during a seminar on Hegel: 'So…Hegel is God?'"	"It's as though imagination is everywhere here: in the magnificent trees, the music, the voodoo, the banana plants growing outside my window. To me, New Orleans is one of those rare places that dream with you."
Ryan Johnson Assistant Professor, Theatre & Dance	Johnson brings African diasporic percussive traditions, theater, technology, scholarship, and community practice into conversation through what he calls Gumbo Theory. The framework treats identity and artistic practice as "layered, seasoned, inherited, transformed, and continually evolving."	"I performed with Gregory Hines. I'm the first African American body percussionist to receive a Guggenheim in choreography."		"I am excited to deepen my understanding of New Orleans' cultural identity" and learn from the communities and artists who have shaped its cultural ecosystem.
Alli Hoag Assistant Professor, Newcomb Department of Art 	"I am fascinated by microscopic forms. When one looks so closely at something, the familiar becomes fantastic." She is also developing Light Forms, a modular structural glass building system. 	"I developed an oyster allergy after I moved away from New Orleans years ago, so as happy as I am to be back, I will have to live without some of my favorite tasty New Orleans treats!"	"If I inhale while blowing on a blowpipe, will my insides get burned?" Hoag adds reassuringly: "Luckily, the answer is no!" 	"I am really inspired by the fact that the whole city has a cultural heartbeat that centers creativity and community." Find her "biking around, exploring New Orleans."
Jason Byas Assistant Professor, Philosophy 	His research focuses on criminal punishment and its alternatives, including "retributive failure," the conditions under which systems for responding to wrongdoing become counterproductive.	"Prior to moving here, New Orleans was the city I'd visited the most without ever living in the associated state."	"When a student openly says that they didn't understand something from the reading and asks for clarification. If one student didn't understand it, it's probably unclear to others — they're just the one brave enough to say it."	"I love places that feel like you're in a particular place with its own character, and not just a randomly selected city. Obviously, New Orleans fits that bill — probably more so than anywhere else in the United States."



	What's at the center of your work?	What's an unexpected piece of your story?	What are you reading, watching or awaiting?	Where might we find you away from campus?
Andrew Ridgeway Assistant Professor, English 	"I like it when students ask why we're doing something. It forces me to ask myself the same question. If I don't have a good answer, it's probably not a very good assignment."	"My wife and I own a bookstore in Fayetteville, North Carolina. It's called Chapter House Books and sells new and used books."	"I've been enjoying Octavia Butler's 'Patternmaster' series," which examines "how power and rigid hierarchies shape relationships and our understanding of community."	"I spend a lot of my free time running online events for my wife's bookstore, including our A–Z Philosophy Club. We're starting with Agamben and ending with Žižek."
Jordi Rivera Prince Assistant Professor, Anthropology 	Rivera Prince is a bioarchaeologist and mortuary archaeologist whose research encompasses human skeletal analysis, burial contexts, beliefs about death, and social inequality. Her cemetery projects extend from Peru to Providence, Rhode Island.	"I participated in Dutch Dance during a festival called Tulip Time at a high school in Holland, Michigan."	"Cinematically, I'm getting ready for the new season of The Real Housewives of New York, and book-wise, I'm always thinking about Victor Villaseñor's 'Rain of Gold.'"	"I'll most likely be at the Crescent City Farmers Market in City Park enjoying a mango-ginger smoothie with my family, eating a Vietnamese po'boy from Singleton's, growing different kinds of chili peppers in my backyard, or trying to see how many alligators I can spot down in the Barataria Preserve."
Robert Seaback Assistant Professor, Newcomb Department of Music 	Seaback's compositions integrate voices, instruments, soundscapes, and synthetic sources through digital techniques, spanning spatial audio, mixed ensemble music, improvisation, and sound installation. 	"I took a cold plunge in Oslo."	"Dune: Part Three." 	He is looking forward to "digging into the rich history and uniqueness of New Orleans and finding a sense of place." Look for him "running around the park, working at a coffee shop or my home studio, at a bar, or a metal concert."
Alexander Schaefer Assistant Professor, Philosophy	Schaefer's current research uses formal methods to study "the evolution and stability of social and moral institutions."		"Can't wait to see Titanic. I'm a bit behind on movies — no spoilers, please." 	"I've heard great things about Tulane students. Nothing is better than teaching students who actually do the assigned reading." Away from campus, he'll be "somewhere that serves gumbo."
Melissa Pavlik Assistant Professor, Political Science 	Pavlik's research examines informality, repression, the effects of political violence, and the political economy of climate change, with a focus on West Africa.	"I was on Reading Rainbow once as a kid." 	"I've been making my way through Alan Furst's 'Night Soldiers' novels—historically detailed stories about resistance networks across Europe during World War II."	"What doesn't excite me about NOLA and Tulane? I'm thrilled about the music, culture, people, complicated history — and beignets." Off campus, she'll be DIYing, befriending neighborhood cats, kayaking, or exploring on foot "when I figure out how to go outside in this humidity without collapsing."

	What question or idea animates your work?	What's your strongest truth for "two truths and a lie?"	What do you enjoy hearing from students?	How are you connecting with New Orleans?
Rebecca De Souza Assistant Professor, Spanish & Portuguese, and Middle East & North African Studies	"How can studying distant, premodern societies today help us shape our communities' futures for the better?"	"I'm not actually Portuguese or Brazilian, contrary to popular belief."	Her teaching invites students to connect the study of distant, premodern societies with questions facing communities today. 	She is excited about "the food in New Orleans and collaborating with new colleagues across Spanish & Portuguese and the MENA program at Tulane." Off campus, she'll be "hanging out in City Park with her hairless Chinese Crested, Roland."
Dylan Parrilla-Koester Professor of Practice, Newcomb Department of Music and the Director of Bands	His interests include "higher music education policy, the philosophical intersection of sport and art, [and] the politics of school curricula." 	"I played trumpet in a second-line funeral in Stratford-upon-Avon to celebrate the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death."	"I love when prospective band students ask anything along the lines of, 'What makes Tulane special?' — I could write a dissertation on it!"	"Marching band culture, of course!" Away from campus, he'll be "jogging on the St. Charles Avenue streetcar tracks."
Aigerim Magavina Professor of Practice, Newcomb Department of Music 	Magavina's work as a collaborative pianist, vocal coach, and educator spans opera, choir, orchestra, musical theatre, and recital performance.	"I can sight-read music on piano faster than I type." 	"My favorite questions are the ones that show how passionate students can be about music. Their excitement reminds me why I love teaching."	"New Orleans has been my home for the past 24 years, and I have come to love this city because of its people, who have continually amazed me with their resilience, kindness, and welcoming spirit. These qualities remind me so much of the people in my native country Kazakhstan, making New Orleans feel like a true second home."
Dustin Gray Assistant Professor, English & Native American & Indigenous Studies	Gray's current book project, 'Novel Silence: The Limits of Articulation in Native American Fiction,' examines inarticulate protagonists and their role in shaping readers' expectations.	"Salman Rushdie once made fun of my nickname." 		What excites him about New Orleans? "The food." Away from campus you can find him at a "record store."
David Landes Assistant Professor, English 	"I study contemporary attention," including how disciplines, communities, and traditions conceive of attention "as an object of study, a method of inquiry, and technique of practice."	"I had prior posts at NYU Shanghai, American University of Beirut, and American University in Dubai."	"How come this wasn't taught to everyone sooner?" 	"I'm a jazz drummer, and this is ground zero." Away from campus, he'll be exploring "art scenes" and "improvising noisy cosmos-trash."